

MISSOURI STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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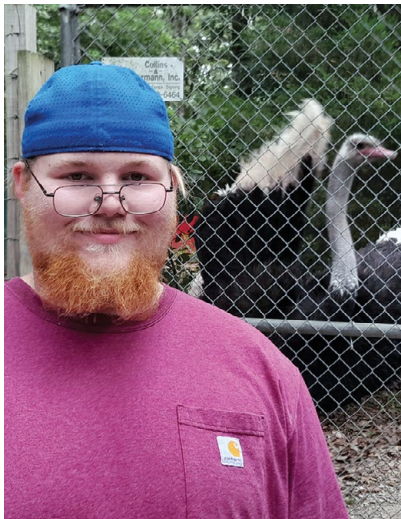
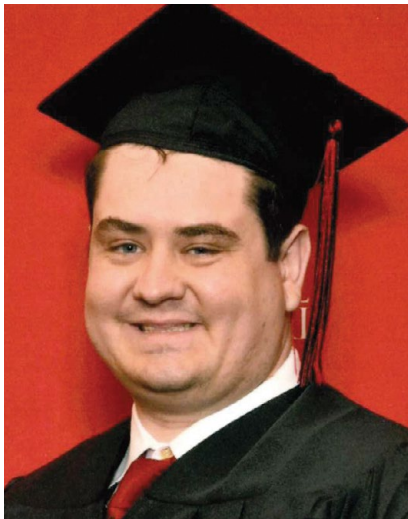


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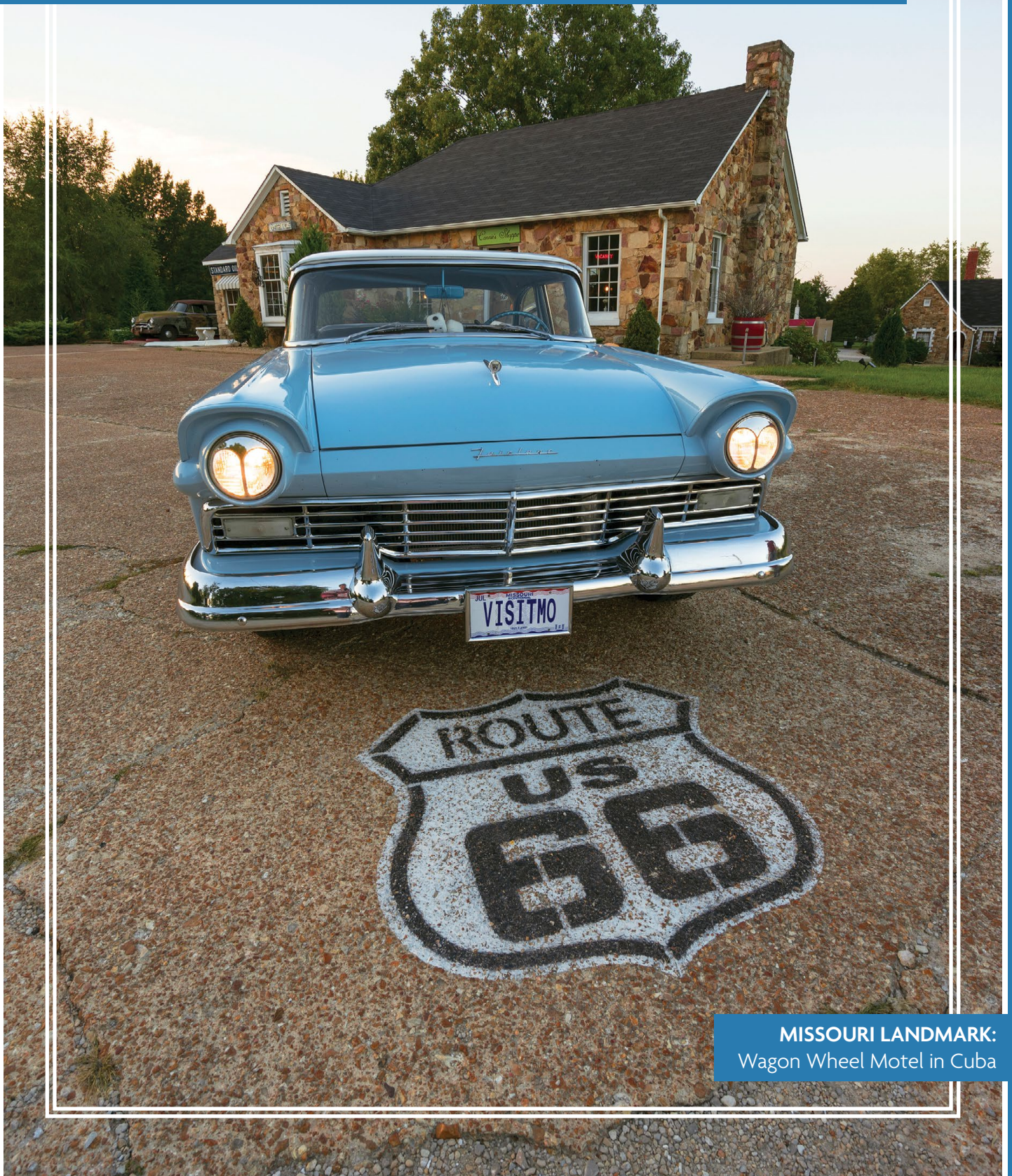


Note: This annual report for calendar year 2024 covers information and data from Program Year (PY) 2023 (July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024).



VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION IN MISSOURI:
A Year in Photos

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL



MISSOURI LANDMARK:
Wagon Wheel Motel in Cuba

MISSION STATEMENT

MISSOURI STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

OUR VISION

The Missouri State Rehabilitation Council envisions a society that values all of its members equally and provides opportunities so that all people are able to meet their needs, fulfill their dreams, and participate in society.

OUR MISSION

To ensure that persons with disabilities have opportunities to be as productive as possible by advising Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation that services provided to persons with disabilities are:

- of the highest quality.
- consumer directed.
- responsive to consumer choice.
- effective.
- individualized.
- culturally specific and relevant to labor market trends.

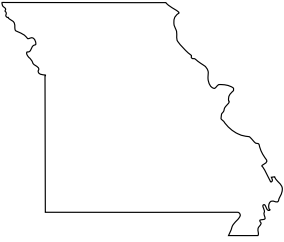
OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

To work in partnership with Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation to achieve positive outcomes for persons with disabilities by:

- providing input on the state plan, policies, and practices affecting services to persons with disabilities.
- obtaining and interpreting consumer input.
- identifying corrective action consistent with that input.
- advocating for adequate resources to ensure that the rehabilitation needs of all Missourians are met.
- identifying strategies to address the needs of people who are not being served or who are being underserved.
- supporting VR in complying with laws applicable to persons with disabilities.

(Adopted Nov. 4, 1999)

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



MISSOURI STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

3024 Dupont Circle ■ Jefferson City, Missouri 65109
Phone: 573-751-3251 ■ Fax: 573-751-1441

Earl Brown, Salem
Chairperson

Karen Gridley, Kansas City
Vice Chairperson

Ronda Anderson, Centertown

Daniel Cayou, Jefferson City

Diana Eakright, Independence

Bob Hosutt, Nixa

Debby Loveall-Stewart, Joplin

Lydia Mitchell, Florissant

Gary Otten, St. Louis

Lori Pace, Rogersville

Sarah Prechtel, St. Louis

Jennifer Stanfield, St. Louis

Tim Tadlock, Gallatin

Chris Clause, California
Ex Officio Member
VR Assistant Commissioner

December 30, 2024

The Honorable Michael L. Parson
Governor of Missouri
State Capitol
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

Dear Governor Parson:

On behalf of the members of the Missouri State Rehabilitation Council, it is my honor to present the Council's annual report for 2024. In these pages, you will find the progress made by Missouri citizens who were served by vocational rehabilitation programs.

Each Council member has unique experiences in advocating for the rights of our fellow Missourians whose physical or mental disabilities may pose barriers to productive employment. Through our quarterly meetings and committee deliberations, we have given our support to Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation to empower individuals with disabilities and to encourage decisions that lead to greater self-sufficiency.

We have advised Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation on innovative programming to reach the underserved populations in the state and on exploring additional methods of obtaining consumer satisfaction feedback.

It has been my great privilege to work with members of the Council as well as with Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation staff, all of whom are dedicated to providing our citizens with the opportunity to make choices in obtaining meaningful employment. Employment is a vital key to independence and equality.

Respectfully,

Earl Brown
Chairperson

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

CHAIRPERSON



EARL BROWN
Salem

VICE CHAIRPERSON

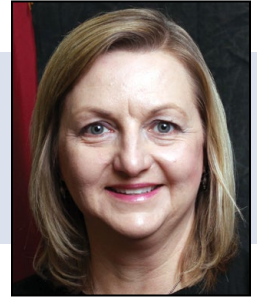


KAREN GRIDLEY
Kansas City

EX OFFICIO MEMBER



CHRIS CLAUSE
California



RONDA ANDERSON
Centertown



DANIEL CAYOU
Jefferson City



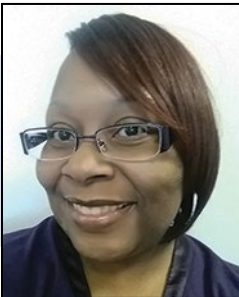
DIANA EAKRIGHT
Independence



BOB HOSUTT
Nixa



DEBBY LOVEALL-STEWART
Joplin



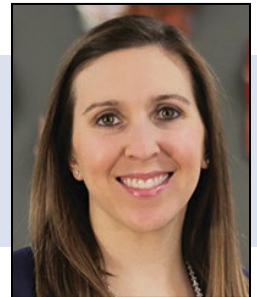
LYDIA MITCHELL
Florissant



GARY OTTEN
St. Louis



LORI PACE
Rogersville



SARAH PRECHTEL
St. Louis



JENNIFER STANFIELD
St. Louis



TIM TADLOCK
Gallatin

COUNCIL'S PURPOSE

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was first authorized by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended in 2014 (referred to hereafter as the Act). Section 105 of the Act requires the state vocational rehabilitation agency to establish a council.

The SRC was initially formed on June 1, 1993. Members are appointed by the governor and serve no more than two consecutive three-year terms. As required by the Act, SRC members represent the Statewide Independent Living Council; the Parent Training and Information Center; the Client Assistance Program; the Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program; the Office of Special Education, which is the state agency responsible for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; the Missouri Workforce Development Board; community rehabilitation program service providers; disability advocacy groups; current or former applicants/recipients of vocational rehabilitation services; and business, industry, and labor.

The SRC is responsible for reviewing, analyzing, and advising VR regarding its performance on such issues as eligibility; the extent, scope, and effectiveness of services; and any other functions affecting people with disabilities. Full SRC meetings are held quarterly on the second Wednesday of February, May, August, and November. Subcommittees meet as needed throughout the year.

During 2024, the SRC was actively involved with VR in the activities below:

Reviewed and provided recommendations to VR regarding the combined state plan's comprehensive statewide needs assessment, goals, priorities, performance accountability measures, and comprehensive system of personnel development

Provided recommendations to VR on policy revisions and rule changes

Participated in and reviewed feedback from VR public hearings to provide input on the combined state plan

Evaluated and provided recommendations on the effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services and satisfaction with those services

Reviewed hearing decisions and mediation outcomes

Assisted VR staff in preparing the SRC's annual report for the governor and the commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration on the status of vocational rehabilitation services in Missouri

Provided comments to VR regarding issues pertaining to waiting lists (Order of Selection)

Coordinated and participated in presentations and activities with other councils and agencies including the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Client Assistance Program, the Statewide Independent Living Council, the Department of Mental Health, the Parent Training and Information Center, Missouri Assistive Technology, the Hearing Loss Association, the Governor's Council on Disability, the Office of Workforce Development, and the Office of Special Education



SUCCESS STORIES:

Ansur Adams

Ansur Adams has dealt with many challenges throughout his life – unemployment, poverty, mental health issues, addiction, and incarceration. He never thought he would get through it all, but instead he has turned his life around.

“It’s been a process,” he said.

Ansur wanted to pursue a degree in social work. He was particularly interested in helping at-risk youths or ex-offenders. He felt his experiences would make him a better social worker. He sought assistance through VR, which gave him a “helping hand.”

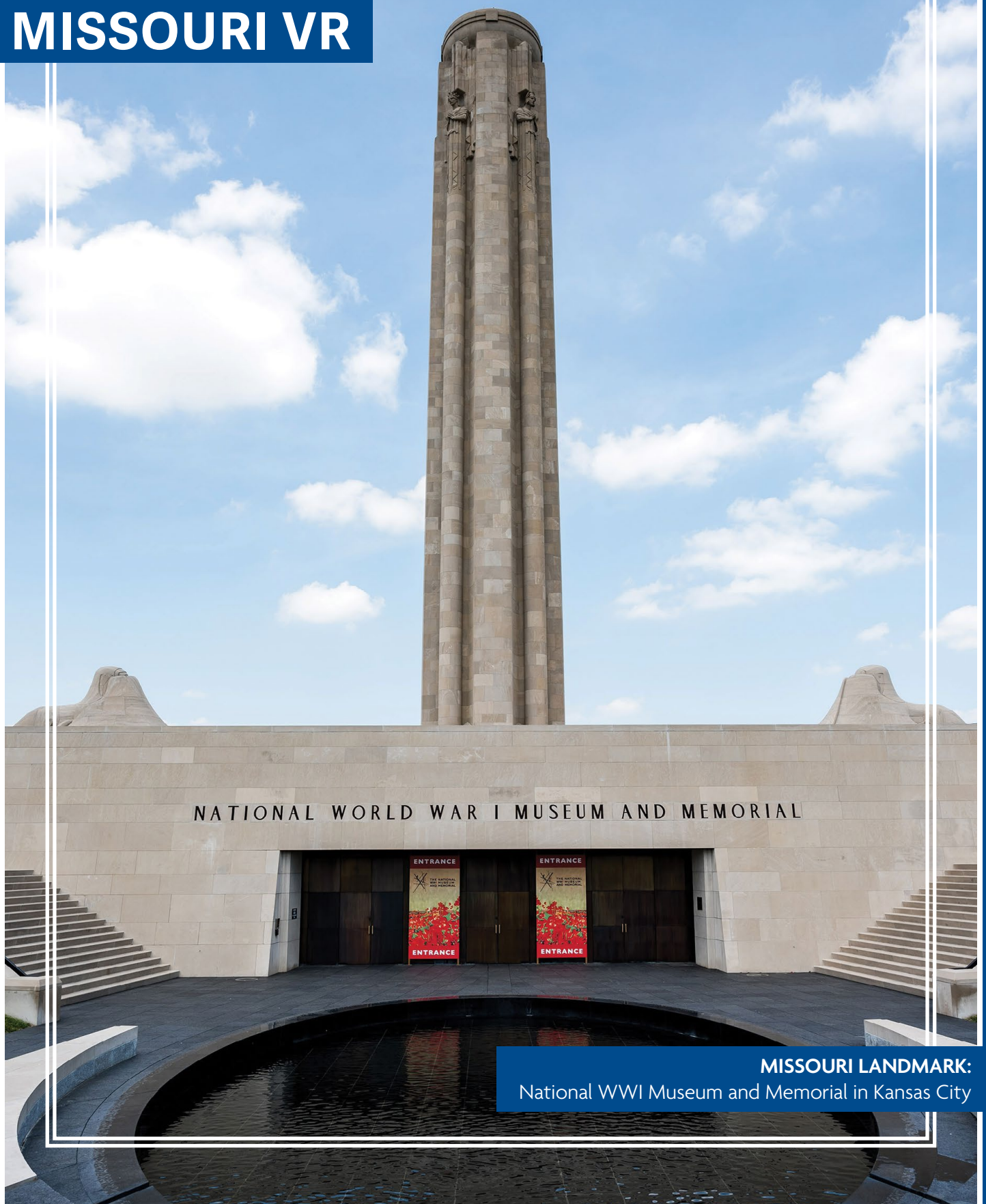
VR offered him guidance and counseling on career possibilities and encouraged his interests.

Even during the “bad spots,” his VR counselors were there to support him emotionally. The program helped him financially by paying for his master’s degree in clinical mental health counseling. VR covered his tuition, books, fees, and a computer for his classes. It also paid the fees for his credentialing.

Ansur is now a licensed professional counselor, and he is successfully employed as a program development manager with Powerhouse Community Development.

Ansur wants to be able to give back and use what he has learned. He wants to help others stay on the right path and “not go down the road that he went down.”

MISSOURI VR



MISSOURI LANDMARK:
National WWI Museum and Memorial in Kansas City

VISION, MISSION, AND PRINCIPLES

MISSOURI VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

VISION

Transforming lives through a great VR experience for everyone

MISSION

Empowering people with disabilities through employment

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

We will:

- Act with a sense of urgency.
- Provide quality customer service.
- Maximize our resources.
- Do the right thing.
- Put people first.
- Continuously evaluate our practices/processes.



LETTER TO THE GOVERNOR



Office of Adult Learning and
Rehabilitation Services

Chris Clause, Ph.D. • Assistant Commissioner

3024 Dupont Circle • Jefferson City, MO 65109 • vr.dese.mo.gov

December 30, 2024

The Honorable Michael L. Parson
Governor of Missouri
State Capitol
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

Dear Governor Parson:

The annual report presented to you from the Missouri State Rehabilitation Council for 2024 provides information on the Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation employment program for individuals with disabilities.

Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation has operated under an Order of Selection since October 2003 due to the number of applicants requesting services, rising service costs, and limited federal funding. The Rehabilitation Act requires eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities to receive services first. All other eligible individuals receive services as funds become available.

During Program Year 2023, Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation helped 3,638 individuals reach successful employment outcomes. Our performance measure outcomes ranked in the top tier nationally. Missouri was third in the nation in Measurable Skill Gains and Credential Attainment and fourth in employment retention 12 months after program completion.

Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation works closely with school districts across the state. The program annually provides transition services, including pre-employment transition services, to approximately 14,000 high school students and youths with disabilities.

Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation grant dollars expended for purchased client services from community vendors are effective and help local economies. In addition, the total annual increase in earnings for individuals with successful outcomes was over \$71 million. The program's customer satisfaction survey results are consistently among the top in the nation.

In closing, the Council and I offer our sincere appreciation for your personal interest and support in serving people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "C. Clause".

Chris Clause, Ph.D.
Assistant Commissioner, Office of Adult Learning and Rehabilitation Services

HIGHLIGHTS



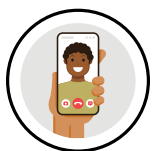
35,904 individuals worked with VR counselors.



3,638 individuals achieved successful employment outcomes.



3,320 individuals achieved a measurable skill gain in an educational or training program.



1,459 youths reached successful employment outcomes.



1,281 successfully employed individuals received supported employment services.



558 successfully employed individuals received Individual Placement and Support services.



97% of successfully employed individuals had significant disabilities.



\$71,130,176 was the total annual increase in earnings for individuals with successful outcomes.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Prepared on behalf of the SRC, this annual report highlights various programs and services of VR during Program Year (PY) 2023 from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024. VR services are reported on a federal program year rather than a federal fiscal year.

VR operates under an Order of Selection with three priority categories. Eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities are required by law to receive services first (Category 1). Eligible individuals who have less significant disabilities are required to be placed on a waiting list for services (Categories 2 and 3).

During PY 2023, VR counselors worked with more than 35,000 individuals in various categories and served more than 8,000 individuals on an average daily basis. VR helped 3,638 individuals with disabilities reach a successful employment outcome. VR continues to assist individuals by monitoring their employment at six months and at 12 months after exiting the program. More than 3,900 individuals with disabilities either obtained employment or were still employed in PY 2023.

STATE FUNDING AND THE SOCIAL SECURITY REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

VR receives state funding from the general revenue fund, the Missouri Lottery, and the Department of Mental Health. The match requirement is 21.3 percent state funding and 78.7 percent federal funding.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) reimburses state vocational rehabilitation agencies for the costs of providing services to assist SSA disability recipients in becoming gainfully employed. Ticket Tracker software is used to interface with VR's case-management system. The software matches and identifies individuals receiving SSA disability benefits whom VR helped in reaching their employment goals. Ticket Tracker has streamlined the consumer identification and reimbursement submission process, enabling VR to receive SSA reimbursements in a more timely and efficient manner. In PY 2023, VR received \$5,162,597 in reimbursement claims. A portion of this funding helps support the Centers for Independent Living in Missouri.



Samantha Heckemeyer, VR Coordinator of Performance Management, presented at the SRC's May meeting.

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 authorizes the VR program. WIOA strengthens the workforce development system by aligning and improving employment, training, and educational programs.

AGENCY OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

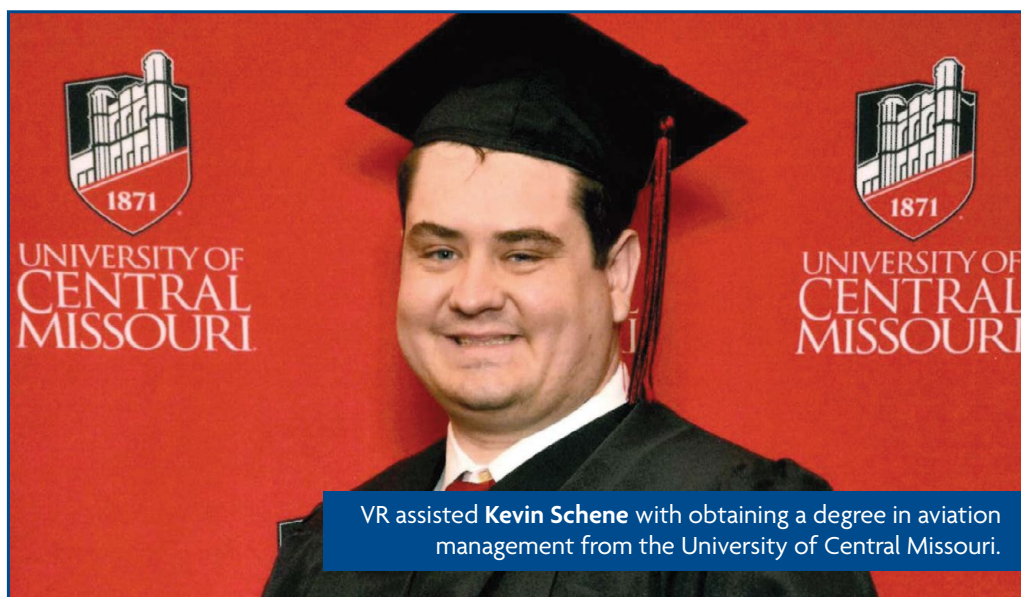
With regard to VR, WIOA focuses on providing services to individuals with disabilities, including youths and students with disabilities, to assist them in achieving competitive, integrated employment. VR continues to help individuals with disabilities prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain employment. VR is committed to developing new relationships with employers and providing flexible strategies like on-the-job training, internships, apprenticeships, and customized employment. VR works with other agencies to create a combined state plan that describes how VR and its partners will collaboratively deliver integrated services to Missouri's job seekers, workers, and employers.

COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

VR and the SRC jointly conduct an annual comprehensive statewide assessment of the rehabilitation needs of Missourians. The conclusions and recommendations of the assessment are incorporated into VR's goals and priorities for the purpose of improving services.

VR uses many methods to collect information for the assessment including customer satisfaction surveys, public hearings, VR strategic teams, SRC input, VR case data, and national census statistics.

Two areas that the assessment specifically focuses on are the needs of individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals from populations that have been traditionally unserved or underserved by vocational rehabilitation programs. The PY 2023 needs assessment identified the minority populations of Hispanics and African-Americans, along with individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), and individuals with traumatic brain injury (TBI) as underserved.



VR remains committed to improving services for underserved populations, increasing their employment outcomes, and reducing the number of individuals from these populations who drop out prior to receiving services.

VR utilizes the following strategies to address these areas of need:

- Employees are provided with training opportunities on cultural competency that cover aspects of diversity.
- An autism services liaison has been appointed to serve as a resource for staff throughout the state. This liaison works with providers on strategies for better serving individuals with ASD.

AGENCY OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

- Employment Services Plus has been developed. This program is designed to assist individuals with ASD, TBI, or deafness/hearing loss who require additional supports to reach successful employment outcomes.



Elizabeth Perkins (left), VR Coordinator of Programs, and Bobby McKee (right), OA Director of Citizen Engagement, each presented at the SRC's May meeting.



Paige DeGuire participated in a VR summer work experience at Wally's in Fenton.



SUCCESS STORIES:

Ann Mandernach

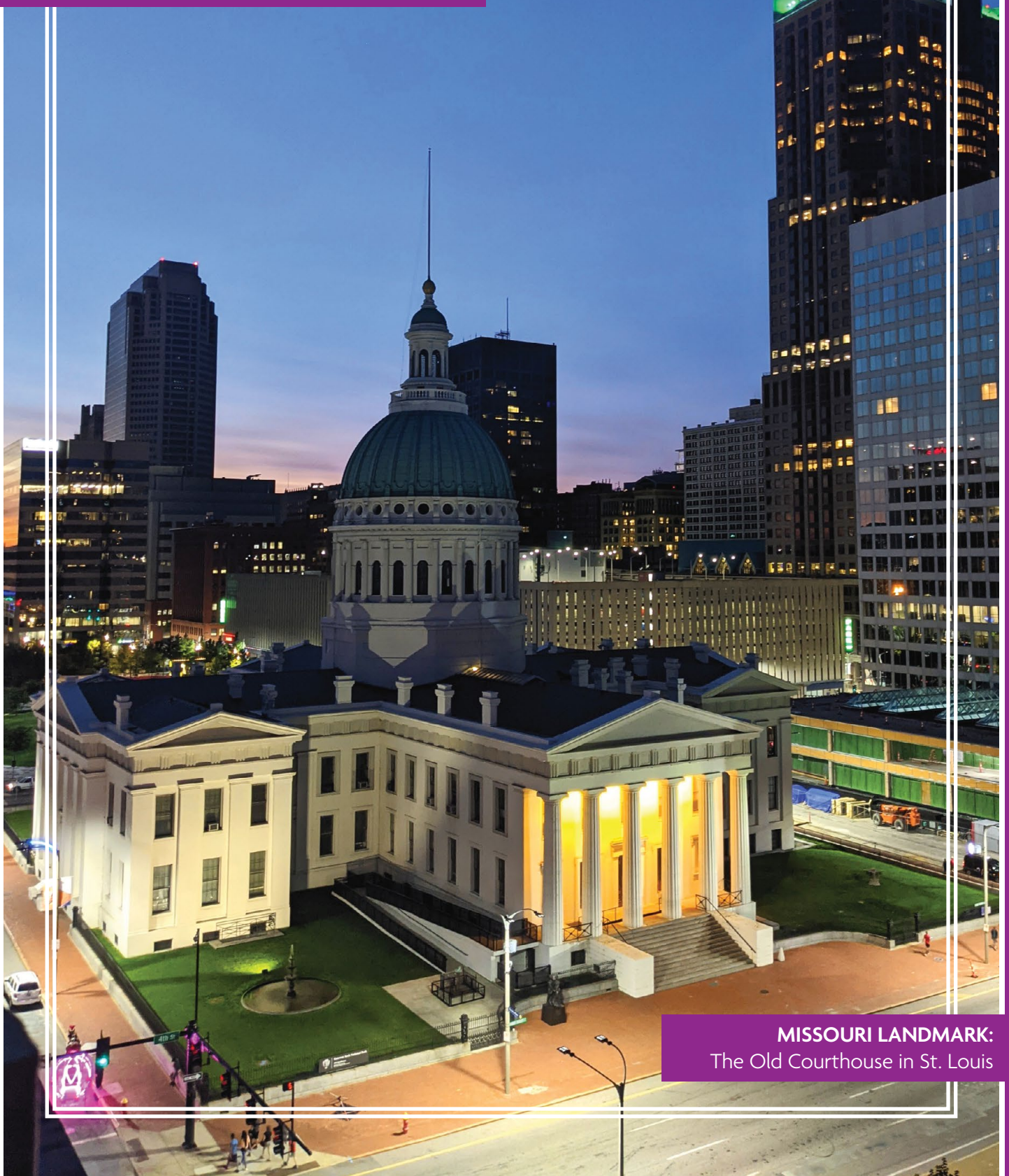
Ann Mandernach got ready for work one November morning. It was just like any other day, except she woke up with a headache. As it turned out, that day wasn't like any other – she suffered a hemorrhagic stroke so powerful that it caused a midline shift in her brain. Fortunately, her son had been taking an EMT course and recognized what was happening. She was rushed to the hospital and admitted to the ICU.

Ann underwent intensive physical, occupational, and speech therapy. As she progressed, she sought support from VR on returning to work. She was a National Labor Relations Board specialist performing paralegal work for the United States Postal Service.

Unfortunately, the stroke caused impaired attention and short-term memory issues. Ann had difficulty completing tasks and decreased functional stamina and endurance. Her VR counselor, Ashleigh O'Dell, offered Ann Employment Services Plus. These services target certain disability groups, such as brain injury patients, to alleviate barriers specific to their impairments. Ann needed accommodations and support with her work tasks. VR worked with the Brain Injury Foundation of St. Louis to provide the specific type of assistance Ann needed.

This May, Ann was back at work on a modified schedule and soon returned full-time using the strategies she had learned through VR.

AREAS OF FOCUS



MISSOURI LANDMARK:
The Old Courthouse in St. Louis

PARTNERING

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT PARTNERS

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires the alignment of core programs in order to provide coordinated and streamlined services. These core programs are VR; Rehabilitation Services for the Blind; Adult Education and Literacy; Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth; and Wagner-Peyser Employment Services. (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families is a combined partner.) Teams composed of representatives from WIOA core partner programs, as well as other partner organizations, have been formed to develop strategies for serving mutual clients. These teams have identified focus areas, such as best practices and agency cross-trainings, that can be shared statewide and at the local level. All program partners strive to improve the workforce system and services to job seekers, employees, and employers.

VR collaborates, coordinates, and cooperates with partner programs to ensure that individuals with disabilities benefit from seamless access to career services, education, and training. VR also participates in business services teams within the workforce system to better serve employers' needs. VR offers a dual-customer approach by supporting its job candidates and businesses in order to achieve successful outcomes for both.



Jamie Devey participated in a VR summer work experience at Goodwill Industries in St. Louis and is receiving additional services through VR.

CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are community-based nonresidential programs designed to promote independent living for people with disabilities. In Missouri, 21 CILs offer independent living services. The CILs are funded through federal and state independent living grants and are managed by local boards composed of individuals with disabilities who have been successful in establishing their own independent lifestyles. VR and the CILs work together on a regular basis to share referrals and provide services to mutual clientele. A number of CILs have VR district office staff as active board members. VR and the CILs have developed a summer work experience program to provide pre-employment transition services. The CILs offer students who are potentially eligible for VR services access to job exploration activities, workplace-readiness training, social support, and instruction on self-advocacy (including peer mentoring). Last summer, three CILs were involved in the program and worked with 11 students.

PARTNERING (CONTINUED)

MISSOURI REENTRY PROCESS

VR participates in the Missouri Reentry Process, which encourages collaboration among government and local agencies to improve the transition of offenders leaving prison and returning to local communities and work. State government agencies are the Departments of Corrections, Higher Education and Workforce Development, Economic Development, Elementary and Secondary Education, Health and Senior Services, Mental Health, Public Safety, Revenue, Social Services, Transportation, and the Office of the State Courts Administrator. Other partnering agencies include the federal probation system along with local law enforcement, faith-based organizations, service providers, and treatment programs.

Missouri was the first state to join Reentry 2030, a national initiative that advances successful reintegration through system change. The governor, the Missouri Department of Corrections, the U.S. Department of Justice Programs' Bureau of Justice Assistance, and Missouri state leaders have committed to Reentry 2030 with the goal of creating positive reentry outcomes for individuals transitioning from incarceration to society. Two VR employees are members of the Reentry 2030 State Advisory Team. VR provides dedicated staff to serve at and offer outreach to Department of Corrections' facilities, creates policy to guide reentry work, and maintains an internal team that focuses on reentry efforts.

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

The Department of Mental Health's (DMH) Divisions of Behavioral Health (DBH) and Developmental Disabilities (DD) have been longstanding partners with VR in assisting eligible individuals seeking vocational rehabilitation services in order to gain employment. Partnership activities include the funding of DB101, a customized Missouri benefits-planning website. Cross-system collaboration remains ongoing through system change initiatives, grant and technical support opportunities, and local/regional trainings. VR has appointed a DMH liaison, and DMH has representation on WIOA teams consisting of combined partner programs and other partner agencies.

In partnership with DBH, Individual Placement and Support (IPS), an evidence-based supported employment service for adults with mental illness, has been a focus. IPS requires close program and clinical relationships between local mental health and vocational rehabilitation staff to ensure success.

VR is also partnering with DD and other agencies to provide a customized employment program that promotes the specific abilities of individuals with disabilities in order to meet employers' needs.



Abby Berry (left) and Emma Davis (right) participated in a VR summer work experience at the Cuba Lakes Golf and Country Club.

PARTNERING (CONTINUED)



Amire Suber participated in a VR summer work experience at the St. Louis Aquarium.

COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

VR and community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) collaboratively work with an outcome-based service model that emphasizes quality employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. CRPs are nonprofit organizations accredited by recognized professional associations that have developed commonly accepted processes for evaluating employment-related services. All independently owned and operated, CRPs provide services that may include vocational planning, job development and placement services, skills training, specialized employment services, supported employment, and transition services.

VR and its CRP partners have implemented several projects to improve services. During summer 2024, a six-week work experience program for students with disabilities was held. Thirty-one CRPs, 1,585 VR-eligible students, and over 200 schools participated at more than 300 employment sites. After the summer work experience ended, 112 students were offered permanent employment. Of the participating students, 279 returned to the program for the second year. Collaboration and partnership are cornerstones of the relationship between VR and CRPs and have fostered an environment of creativity and innovation. The VR-CRP steering committee meets regularly to review progress on its organizations' joint projects and on service delivery.

SERVICES

TRANSITION SERVICES

VR places a significant emphasis on services to youths and students with the intent of ensuring that young individuals with disabilities are better prepared and have more opportunities for competitive, integrated employment. In collaboration with local education agencies, VR provides pre-employment transition services to eligible or potentially eligible students ages 14 to 21. These services include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs, workplace-readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy (including peer mentoring).

VR has helped to develop and implement innovative programs to provide pre-employment transition services. VR has also established partnerships with the University of Missouri's College of Education, CILs, CRPs, businesses, and local school districts. With its partners, VR offers pre-employment transition services statewide. During PY 2023, over 11,000 potentially eligible students received at least one pre-employment transition service.

VR provides youths with disabilities ages 14 to 24 a variety of other transition services such as job placement, supported employment, training, and rehabilitation technology. A team of professionals from VR, local school districts, and other agencies has been assembled to offer support and technical assistance on these services.



Asia Hayes participated in a VR summer work experience at Dutch Valley Store in Warrensburg.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

VR provides supported employment (SE) services to a diverse population as indicated by Figures 1-4 (pages 23-24). Some of these services are jointly provided by DMH DBH-DD. SE is defined as competitive work in an integrated work setting with ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. During PY 2023, 1,281 individuals who received SE services and exited the program were successfully employed.

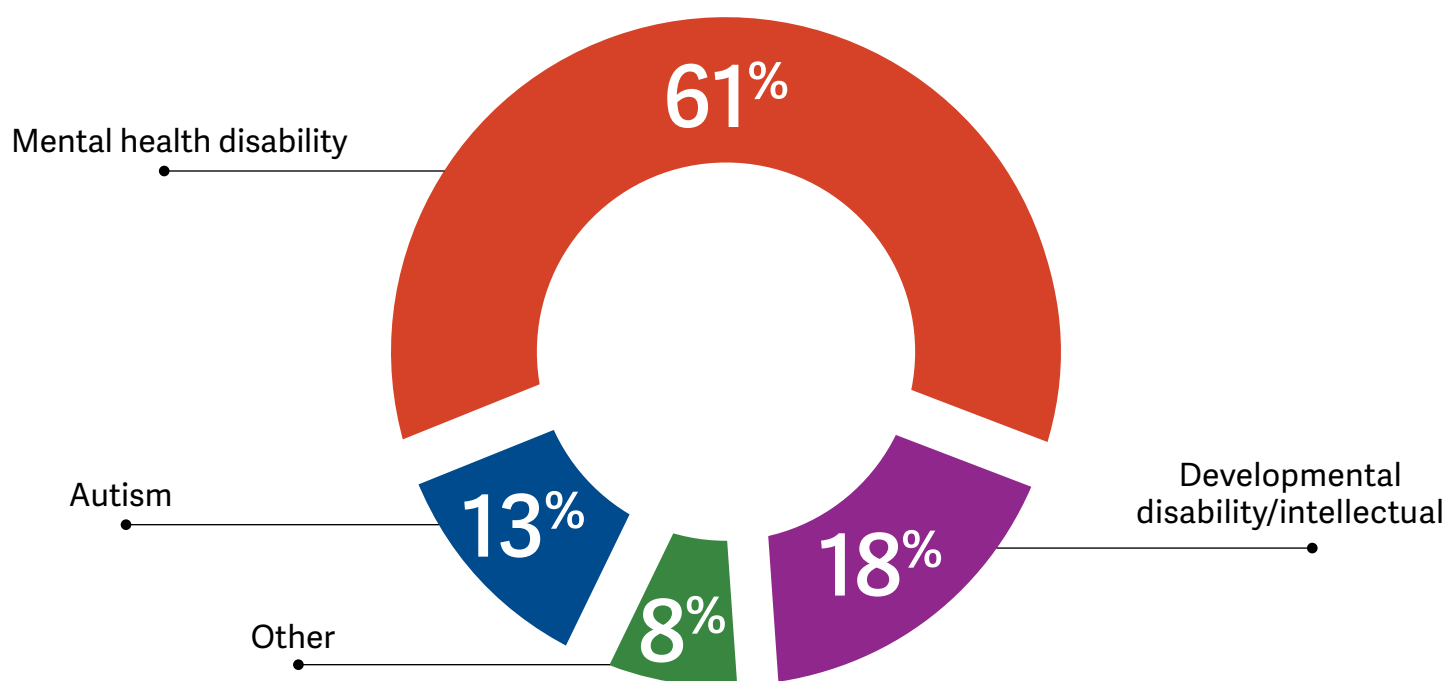
SERVICES (CONTINUED)

In PY 2023, VR worked with 125 CRP locations that provide SE services and cover all counties in Missouri. An outcome-based model of SE services is used that features a period of discovery and exploration with the individual to develop vocational direction and community-based job exploration. Outcomes include job placement, 30 days of independent employment, and 90 days of employment. In addition to these milestones, on-the-job and off-site supports may also be authorized.

VR places an emphasis on the development of natural support systems to help individuals participating in supported employment successfully remain in the workforce. These natural supports help to reduce the cost of providing SE services. Figure 4 (page 24) shows the average cost of services, hourly wages, and other statistics for supported employment.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT Disability Categories of Those Served: PY 2023

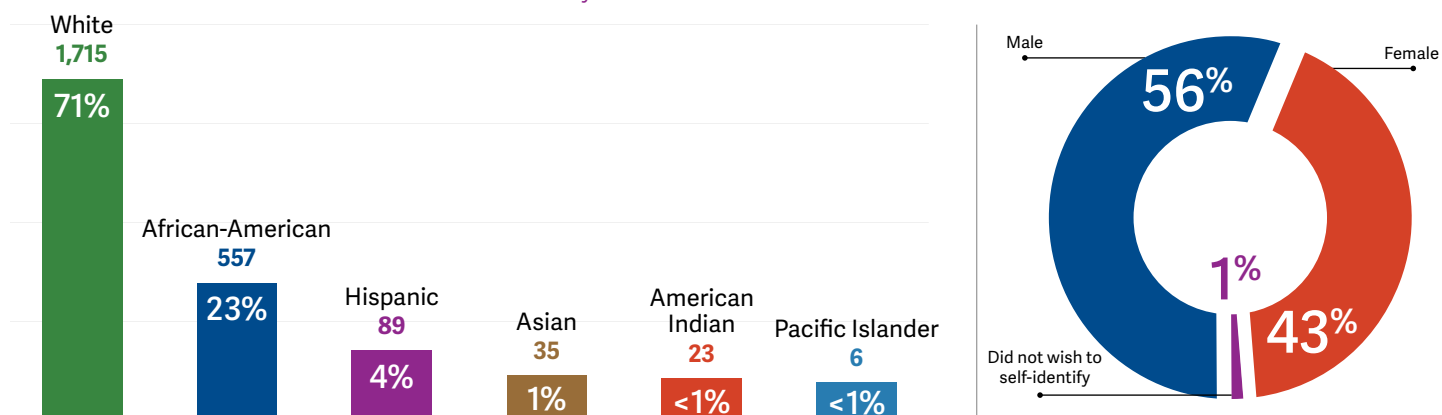
Figure 1



SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Ethnicity and Gender of Those Served: PY 2023

Figure 2



SERVICES (CONTINUED)

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Age of Those Served: PY 2023

| AGE | NUMBER | PERCENT |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| Less than 25 | 792 | 33% |
| 25-34 | 609 | 25% |
| 35-44 | 458 | 19% |
| 45-54 | 320 | 13% |
| 55-64 | 212 | 9% |
| 65 and over | 34 | 1% |
| TOTAL | 2,425 | 100% |

Figure 3

OTHER SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS: PY 2023

| | |
|--|---------|
| Average cost of supported employment services per person | \$1,611 |
| Average hourly wage per person | \$13.89 |
| Average hours per week worked per person | 24 |
| Successful outcomes | 1,281 |
| Total participants | 2,425 |

Figure 4

Note: All information in figures 1-4 applies to SE services only.



William Nusbaum (left) received VR rehabilitation technology services to modify his truck and motorized wheelchair. Yulanda Jones (right) is his VR counselor.

REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY

In PY 2023, VR provided a variety of rehabilitation technology services, assistive devices, and equipment to 648 individuals who received services and exited the program. VR purchases assistive devices to help with increasing, maintaining, or improving functional capabilities. Devices could include hearing aids and other personal listening and communication devices, vehicle and home modifications, wheelchairs, and other powered mobility equipment. Rehabilitation technology services include consultation, evaluation, design, customization, adaptation, maintenance, repair, therapy, and technical training.

SERVICES (CONTINUED)



Tyler Hannigan received VR services and is currently employed with the YMCA in Wildwood.

VR and Missouri Assistive Technology (MoAT) have collaborated to develop a cooperative agreement to ensure the maximum statewide utilization of services. The agreement provides a plan for service coordination; for using resources to the best advantage; for information sharing, technical support, and training; to facilitate the referral of potentially eligible individuals between agencies; and to help eligible people obtain rehabilitation technology services. A VR staff member is a representative on the MoAT Advisory Council.

In April, MoAT presented the Power Up 2024 Assistive Technology Conference and Expo. The conference was open to service providers, consumers, independent living specialists, VR staff, and other professionals in the rehabilitation field. Twenty-two VR staff members attended the event. The conference was successful in providing an opportunity to view state-of-the-art technology and equipment designed to enhance and promote independence and quality of life.

Several VR professionals have specialized caseloads in the area of rehabilitation technology. Located throughout Missouri are five VR counselors and one assistant director who are skilled in manual communication for the deaf and hard of hearing. VR employs a director and assistant director of rehabilitation technology who assist staff statewide on delivering rehabilitation technology services.

VR utilizes assistive technology demonstration sites located at CILs across the state for exploring, reviewing, and demonstrating various devices, services, and resources that are available to individuals with alternative communication needs. VR counselors are allowed to borrow rehabilitation technology equipment from MoAT for individuals to test before purchase.



SUCCESS STORIES:

Jacob Ritter

Jacob Ritter believes the best part of VR is that if you are willing to do your part, the rest will come naturally. “If you really want to put in the work and effort, VR is really for you,” he said.

During high school, Jacob received pre-employment transition services through VR. After being asked in class if he was interested in a job-exploration program with IT, he participated in the Four Rivers Career Center’s IT and cybersecurity training program.

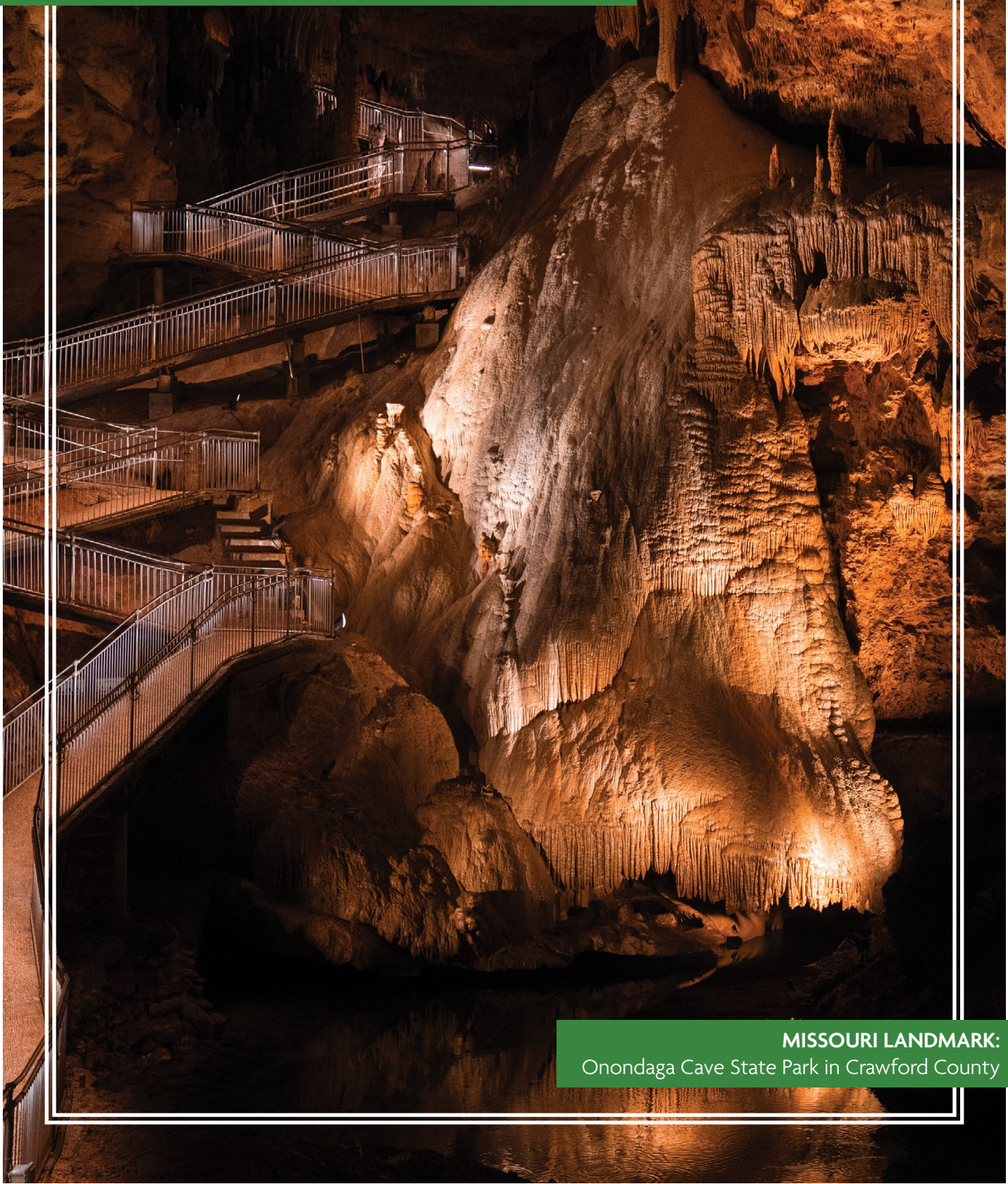
Upon graduation, Jacob secured an IT job with Compass Health Network through VR’s progressive employment program in collaboration with the Missouri Job Center of St. Charles

and MERS Goodwill. Progressive employment provides individuals with little or no work experience or other barriers the opportunity for paid employment. It helps individuals gain confidence and increase their skill levels.

His VR counselor, Dina Brockman, helped him with his certification and résumé writing. Jacob said Dina is “always there for me.”

Jacob did so well with progressive employment that he has obtained permanent employment with Compass Health and wants to work his way up in the company. He said cybersecurity is “like being a detective to find breaches before they happen. It’s intriguing.”

SUMMARY OF RESULTS



MISSOURI LANDMARK:
Onondaga Cave State Park in Crawford County

SATISFACTION SURVEY

Satisfaction with staff and services is a VR priority, and the SRC's Program Evaluation Committee continues to work with VR on reviewing and analyzing feedback from individuals who receive VR services. This feedback is shared with management, supervisors, and counselors and is used as a tool to improve services, evaluate staff performance, and determine training needs.

During PY 2023, survey letters and postage-paid envelopes were mailed to a random sample of 10,965 individuals at various stages in the rehabilitation process. Survey feedback was positive. Results showed that 98 percent of those surveyed felt they were treated with respect, 97 percent felt they knew the purpose of VR, and 96 percent felt that staff was available when needed. The overall results are listed on page 29.

SGC

Survey Group Chat>

I appreciate all that the VR program has to offer.

(VR) let me know I was not alone. They were a great source of emotional support.

VR has completely changed my life in so many ways.

VR made me feel that I can do anything I put my mind to.

I was very happy with (VR) and with my VR counselor.

VR helped me to finish school to graduate as an RN. I am employed full time.

(VR counselors) are inspiring and help me with VR services for college tuition.

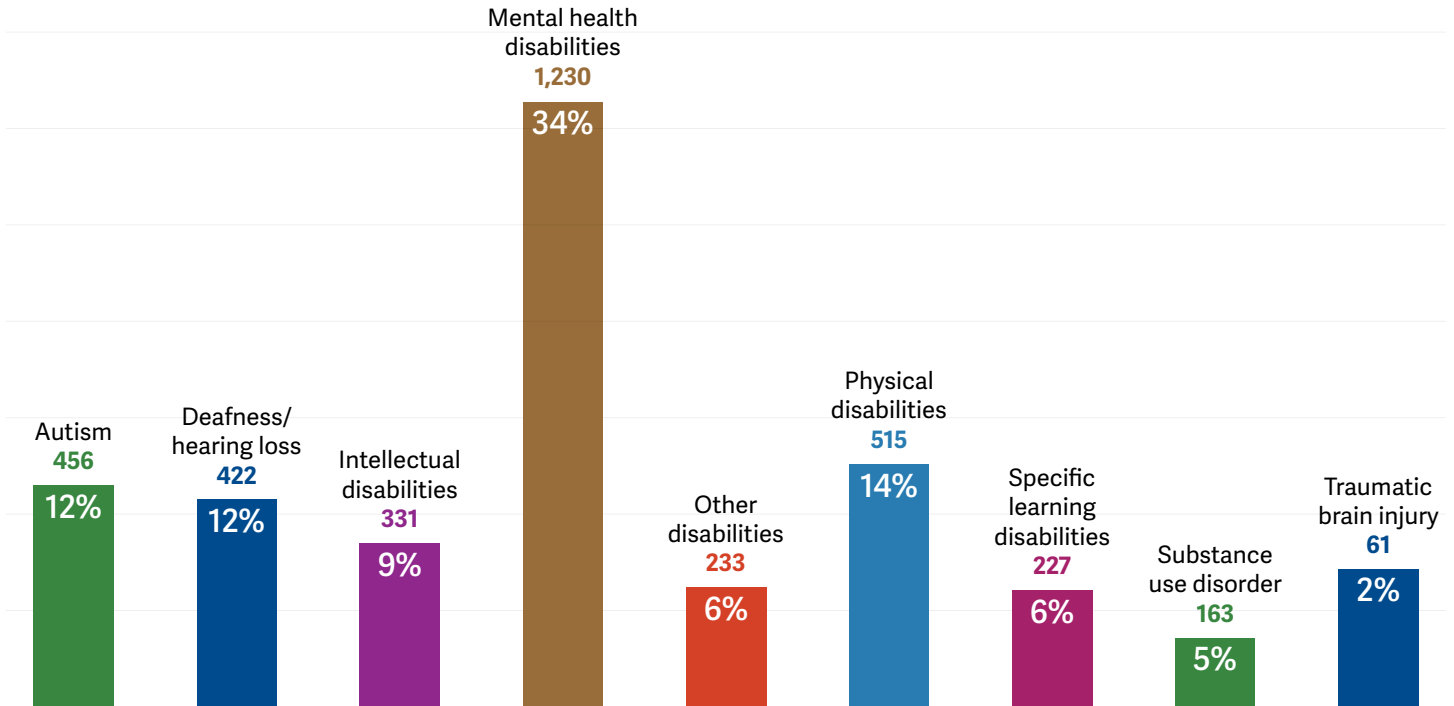
SATISFACTION SURVEY (CONTINUED)

| SURVEY RESULTS (Specific group responses) | TOTAL RESPONSES RECEIVED | STAFF WAS AVAILABLE | | STAFF TREATED ME WITH RESPECT | | I KNEW PURPOSE OF VR SERVICES | | COUNSELOR HELPED PLAN SERVICES | | COUNSELOR EXPLAINED CHOICES | |
|--|--------------------------------|------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|-----|
| | | YES | NO | YES | NO | YES | NO | YES | NO | YES | NO |
| Total responses | 977 | 96% | 4% | 98% | 2% | 97% | 3% | 93% | 7% | 95% | 5% |
| Open cases | 491 | 96% | 4% | 99% | 1% | 98% | 2% | 95% | 5% | 97% | 3% |
| Successful outcomes | 318 | 99% | 1% | 99% | 1% | 97% | 3% | 96% | 4% | 96% | 4% |
| Unsuccessful outcomes; closed before services | 48 | 82% | 18% | 93% | 7% | 93% | 7% | 73% | 27% | 82% | 18% |
| Unsuccessful outcomes; closed after services | 120 | 92% | 8% | 96% | 4% | 94% | 6% | 82% | 18% | 90% | 10% |
| Supported employment individuals | 256 | 97% | 3% | 99% | 1% | 99% | 1% | 96% | 4% | 96% | 4% |
| Individuals under 25 at application | 347 | 96% | 4% | 99% | 1% | 97% | 3% | 92% | 8% | 94% | 6% |
| Individuals with autism | 134 | 97% | 3% | 99% | 1% | 98% | 2% | 94% | 6% | 98% | 2% |
| Individuals with deafness/ hearing loss | 104 | 98% | 2% | 99% | 1% | 89% | 11% | 91% | 9% | 95% | 5% |
| Individuals with mental health disabilities | 305 | 94% | 6% | 98% | 2% | 98% | 2% | 93% | 7% | 95% | 5% |
| Individuals with physical disabilities | 144 | 96% | 4% | 99% | 1% | 93% | 7% | 92% | 8% | 94% | 6% |
| Individuals with traumatic brain injury | 32 | 94% | 6% | 100% | 0% | 100% | 0% | 97% | 3% | 93% | 7% |
| Individuals with other disabilities | 180 | 97% | 3% | 99% | 1% | 93% | 7% | 93% | 7% | 95% | 5% |

PROGRAM DATA

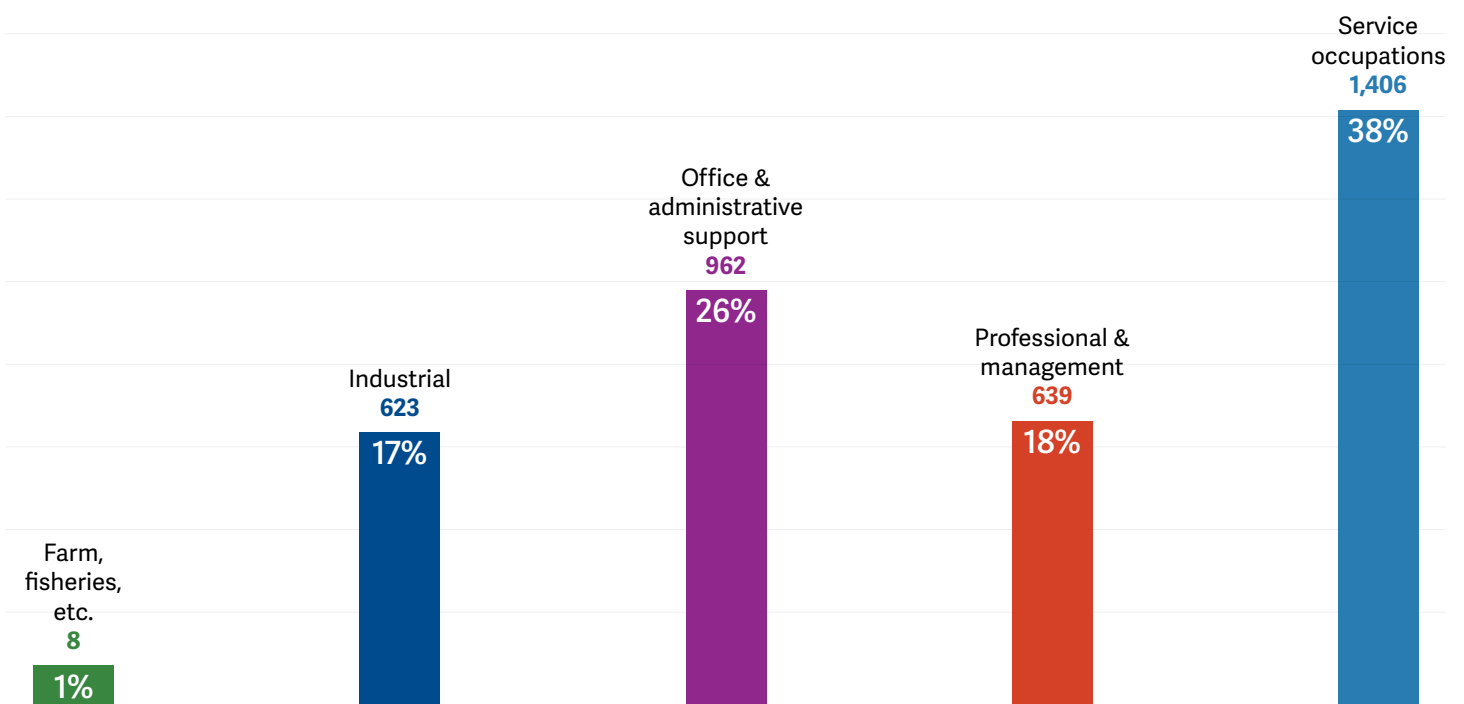
DISABILITY CATEGORIES

3,638 Individuals With Successful Employment Outcomes: PY 2023



OCCUPATIONS

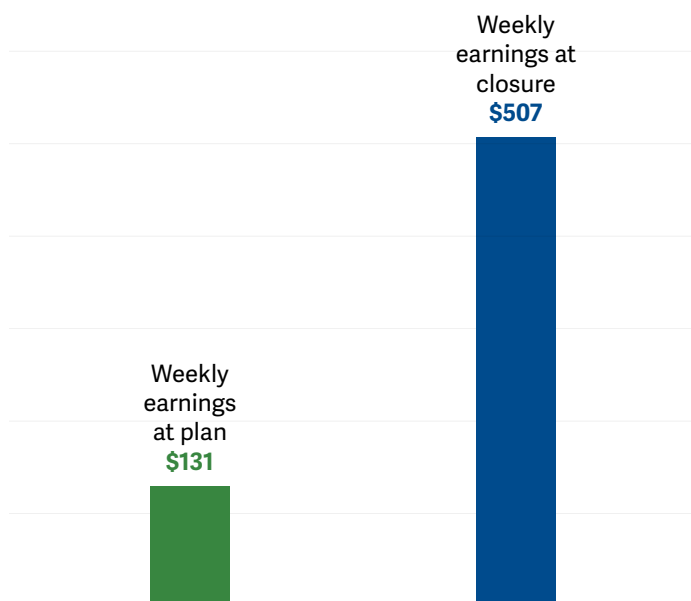
3,638 Individuals With Successful Employment Outcomes: PY 2023



PROGRAM DATA (CONTINUED)

IMPACT OF VR SERVICES

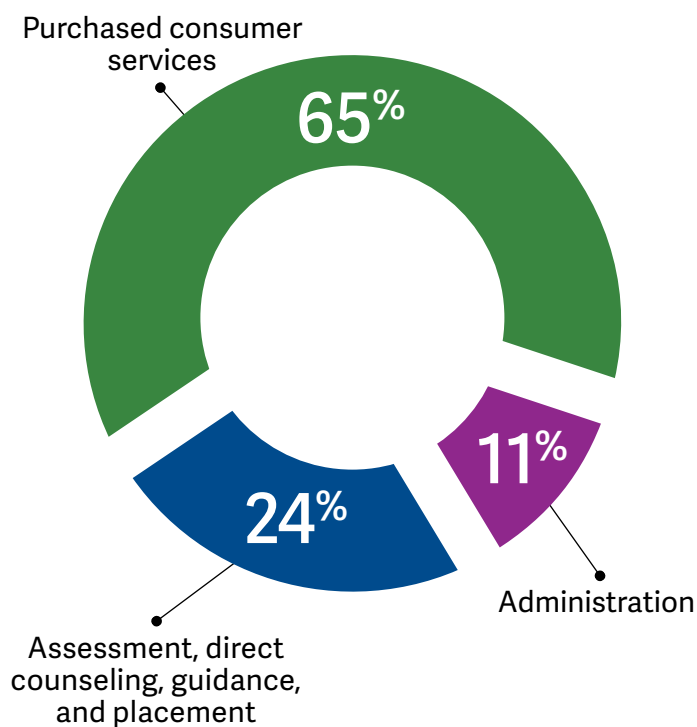
PY 2023



With an increase in average weekly earnings of \$376 for 3,638 individuals with successful outcomes, the total annual increase in income amounted to \$71,130,176.

EXPENDITURES

PY 2023



GENDER

Individuals With Successful Employment Outcomes: PY 2023

| GENDER | NUMBER | PERCENT |
|-------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Male | 2,005 | 55% |
| Female | 1,612 | 44% |
| Did not wish to self-identify | 21 | 1% |
| TOTAL | 3,638 | 100% |

ETHNICITY

Individuals With Successful Employment Outcomes: PY 2023

| GENDER | NUMBER | PERCENT |
|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| White | 2,777 | 76% |
| African-American | 648 | 18% |
| Hispanic | 131 | 4% |
| Asian | 47 | 1% |
| American Indian | 29 | <1% |
| Pacific Islander | 6 | <1% |
| TOTAL | 3,638 | 100% |

AGE

Individuals With Successful Employment Outcomes: PY 2023

| AGE | NUMBER | PERCENT |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| Less than 25 | 1,312 | 36% |
| 25-34 | 785 | 22% |
| 35-44 | 561 | 15% |
| 45-54 | 444 | 12% |
| 55-64 | 356 | 10% |
| 65 and over | 180 | 5% |
| TOTAL | 3,638 | 100% |

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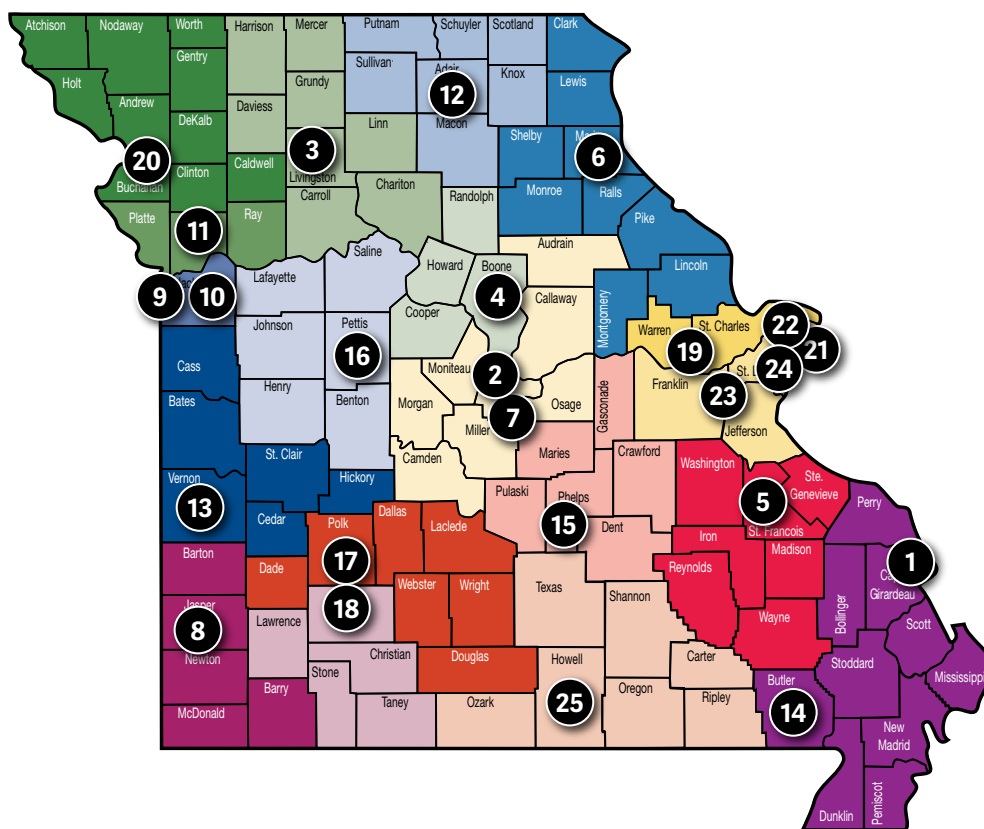
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The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program receives 78.7 percent of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For Federal Fiscal Year 2024, the total amount of grant funds awarded was \$70,447,118. The remaining 21.3 percent of the costs (\$19,066,374) was funded by state matching funds. The Supported Employment (SE) program receives 95 percent of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For Federal Fiscal Year 2024, the total amount of grant funds awarded was \$268,698. The remaining 5 percent of the costs (\$14,142) was funded by state matching funds. The Independent Living (IL) program receives a portion of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For Federal Fiscal Year 2024, the total amount of grant funds awarded was \$348,060 (90 percent). The remaining 10 percent (\$38,673) was funded by state matching funds. The IL program also received additional state funding for an overall total of \$6,053,103.

Photo on page 4 provided by the Missouri Division of Tourism.

Photo on page 10 provided by the National WWI Museum and Memorial.

Photo on page 18 provided by Greg Hronick.

Photo on page 27 provided by Missouri State Parks.